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SIPDIS

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HQ USAF FOR XXXX
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1. Mideast](#)
- [2. Syria Governance](#)
- [3. U.S.-Israel Relations](#)

Key stories in the media:

In its lead story, Ha'aretz reported that in a letter sent to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the foreign ministries of Britain, Russia, and the U.S., James Wolfensohn, the Quartet's special envoy for the disengagement, criticized Israel for holding up agreements on opening Gaza Strip border crossings to the passage of people and goods and on improving Palestinian mobility in the West Bank. Wolfensohn allegedly wrote that the GOI acted "as if there had been no withdrawal."

On Sunday, Ha'aretz quoted a senior State Department official as saying on Friday that Israeli and Palestinian obligations undertaken under the Roadmap are not of equal importance. The official, who reportedly asked to remain anonymous, was quoted as saying that the PA's commitment to fight terror is more crucial than Israel's commitment to freeze settlement construction and evacuate illegal settlement outposts.

On Sunday, The Jerusalem Post reported that a senior GOI source told the newspaper on Saturday: "Israel is not going to stop Hamas from participating in the [Palestinian Legislative Council] elections." The source was also quoted as saying that Israel would not deal politically with Hamas following the elections, should members of the group be elected to office. In addition, the source was quoted as saying that Israel would not take any steps to help with the elections should Hamas participate in them. He did not clarify what he meant. Ha'aretz reported that contrary to the Israeli stance, the U.S. administration has accepted the position of PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas that the right time to confront Hamas and its disarmament is after the Palestinian elections in January. Israel has been demanding that Abbas confront Hamas now because it has created a "second authority" that is posing a threat to the PA and Abbas's future. Ha'aretz quoted diplomats in New York as saying that despite the U.S. administration's strong condemnations of Syria since Friday, the U.S. prefers not to take far-reaching steps against Damascus at the UN Security Council at this stage. Leading media quoted senior U.S. officials, including President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, as saying during the weekend that Syria must be brought to account for its actions in Lebanon. Ha'aretz also quoted sources in New York as saying that a report due to be published today at UN headquarters, compiled by the UN special envoy to Lebanon Terje Roed-Larsen, with a view to implementing UNSC Resolution 1559, will focus on arms smuggled from Syria to Lebanon that reach the Palestinian refugee camps and constitute a central threat to the stability of Lebanon and a danger to its security. On Sunday,

Ha'aretz reported that opinions are divided in Jerusalem as to whether the fall of Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime would be good for Israel. The newspaper quoted senior Israeli government officials as saying on Saturday that Assad's fall would benefit Israel because Syria's government was the worst possible regime. On the other hand, the daily quoted a senior Israeli military official as saying that a rise to power in Syria of the Muslim Brotherhood and extremists who might even cooperate with Al Qaida could be more dangerous.

Israel Radio reported that last night, two armed Palestinians were killed in Tulkarm by IDF fire. The radio reported that one of them, Luai Saadi, was the head of the armed branch of Islamic Jihad in the West Bank and was wanted for planning major terrorist attacks. On Sunday, the media reported that the IDF arrested five wanted men near Nablus on Saturday, one of whom had concealed a grenade in his infant son's blanket. All media (lead stories in Yediot and Maariv) cited the Shin Bet as saying that two Israeli dentists -- Dr. Nazmi Hassin from Nazareth and Dr. Asalam Zeidan from the village of Kafr Manda -- who were recruited by Hamas during their dentistry studies in Romania in the 1990s, have been arrested. They reportedly trained in Turkey in order to carry out terrorist attacks in Israel. On Sunday and today, Maariv highlighted a warning by the Israeli defense establishment that the launching of Qassam rockets from the West Bank into Kfar Sava and other Sharon region cities is only a question of time. On Sunday, the newspaper cited assessments by the IDF that the manufacture of rockets in Samaria (the northern West Bank) cannot be prevented.

Leading media reported that on Sunday, the PA announced a security plan aimed at disarming the armed wing of Fatah and recruiting hundreds of its members into the security forces.

On Sunday, Yediot quoted associates of PM Sharon as saying that former Shin Bet head Avi Dichter will join Sharon's election campaign.

On Sunday, Yediot cited the belief of senior officials in the Israeli defense industries that those manufacturers are bound to dismiss thousands of workers if the U.S. continue to cause Israeli weapons deals to fail.

On Sunday, Maariv cited Knesset Member Binyamin Netanyahu's denial of last week's Maariv story that claimed he was considering retiring from political life.

Major media reported that on Sunday, the Jewish Agency donated 100,000 shekels (approx. USD 21,600) to victims and their families of the attack by Jewish terrorist Eden Natan-Zada aboard a bus in the Israeli-Arab town of Shfaram at the beginning of August. The Jerusalem Post notes that it was the first time that money from a special fund established shortly following the outbreak of the Intifada to help victims of terror has been given to Israeli Arabs who were victims of Jewish terror.

On Sunday, Ha'aretz and Jerusalem Post reported that on Saturday, President Bush announced his intention to nominate Paul J. McNulty of Virginia as deputy attorney general at the Justice Department. McNulty is the federal prosecutor responsible for the cases of former defense analyst Larry Franklin and the two former AIPAC lobbyists, Steven Rosen and Keith Weissman.

On Sunday, The Jerusalem Post reported that William Daroff, a Republican activist with bipartisan ties, was selected to lead Washington operations for the United Jewish Communities.

Yediot front-paged the picture of a Native American who is a member of a group that came to Israel to "encourage the Gush Katif evacuees."

Leading media reported that businessman Shmuel Levy, a dual Israeli-American citizen who disappeared in Greece, was killed there during an attempted robbery.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized:

" Hamas's participation in the election should not be viewed as a concession on the demand to stop the terror. Rather, it should be seen as an attempt to reach the same goal using different means."

Block Quotes:

"Do Not Disturb"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (October 23): "In answer to a question about the timetable for the creation of a Palestinian state, President George W. Bush gave a partly religious response: 'I believe that two democratic states living side by side in peace is possible. I can't tell you when it's going to happen.' Later on, he said it might not happen during his presidential term. Even if the statement was intended to pressure the Palestinians to disarm the militant organizations quickly, in order to follow the route prescribed in the road map, it is doubtful that lowering expectations is the desired approach.... [Likewise], Israel's desire to take Hamas out of the political game is apparently not in keeping with reality. Israel's indelicate interference in the Palestinian elections, as punishment for Hamas's participation in them, will only further weaken Abbas. In this matter, at least, the American position seems clear. Hamas's participation in the election should not be viewed as a concession on the demand to stop the terror. Rather, it should be seen as an attempt to reach the same goal using different means. To Abbas, too, it is clear that no diplomatic process can be carried out under fire, and his intention to achieve calm through democratic means is deserving of trust and support at least for a limited period. Israel's role at this stage is not to disturb."

2. Syria Governance:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "A regime that employs terrorist means to implement its policy will have to be brought to account and even punished."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "This time, we hope, Damascus may have taken its 'misunderestimation' of the international community one step too far."

Block Quotes:

1I. "An Unfit Regime"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (October 24): "Lebanon, which has done more than any other party in the region, including the United States and the Arab League, to free itself from Syria's hold, also wishes to sever itself from the 'joint track' doctrine that Syria dictated. This is the doctrine that prevented Lebanon from conducting peace negotiations with Israel on its own. Lebanon's political independence is therefore an important Israeli interest, which, even if Israel does not succeed at this time in persuading Lebanon to advance toward peace negotiations with it, at least holds out hope that Syria would not stand in the way of the process. It is possible that the conclusions of the two investigative commissions attest merely to another attempt to adapt Syria's policies to the ambitions of the United States, especially regarding Syrian cooperation in the war in Iraq. That, however, is not sufficient to negate their basic assumption: a regime that employs terrorist means to implement its policy will have to be brought to account and even punished."

II. "Catching Rogues"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (October 23): "The significance of the Mehlis report is that it shows how, given an international climate of decreasing tolerance for terrorism, victimized nations can puncture the thin veil of deniability and doubt that has protected aggressor regimes until now. It says that the West will not wait for the level of proof

required by a criminal court before pointing an accusing finger and acting to protect itself. Syrian protestations regarding flimsy evidence and the presumption of innocence are, of course, risible coming from a brutal police state whose idea of justice has infamously included carpet-bombing its own citizens. Yet the fact that the regime would even attempt such a defense shows that it still believes that there are no limits to Western gullibility and weakness. This time, we hope, Damascus may have taken its 'misunderestimation' of the international community one step too far."

13. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Should Israel find out, within a few months, that the American companies are upgrading the F-16 planes for Venezuela, then we would become worthless."

Block Quotes:

"The United States Is Turning Israel Into a Worthless Element"

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (October 23): "During the discussions over the memorandum of understanding between Israel and the U.S., following [Israel's] arms sales to China, the Americans have pledged that limitations [of sales] will only be subject to purely diplomatic considerations. In other words -- Israel will not be forced into a situation in which a veto on a deal will be imposed on Israel due to pressure by the American defense industries in the same markets. The deal to upgrade Venezuelan aircraft would be the test: should Israel find out, within a few months, that the American companies are upgrading the F-16 planes for Venezuela, then we would become worthless.... In a semi-official communication, not a real demand, the U.S. State Department has thanked Israel for having acceded to its request that the deal with Venezuela be canceled. It has also pledged that no economic pressure by American firms is hiding under the request. Will this expression of gratitude put across 'measures to ease the siege' on Israeli security exports? There's no chance of that happening."

JONES